

# Ames Historical Society

AMES • IOWA

FOUNDED 1980 AS AMES HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter to Members 2004 SUMMER...ISSUE #3/4

*The mission of the Ames Historical Society is to preserve local history and illuminate its stories.*



*The Sheldon-Munn hotel opened in 1916 and was the showplace of Ames. The original blueprints are in the collection of the Ames Historical Society.*

### Ames Historical Society Board:

**President** Kathy Svec  
**Vice-President** Janet Jepeway  
**Secretary** Carole Jensen  
**Treasurer** Peggy Baer

### Members:

Jorgen Rasmussen, Lynn Jenison, Leo Lawler, Margaret Elbert Benson, Catherine Hunt, Dennis Wendell, Deborah Vance, Ken Cameron, Cynthia Bennet

The Board meets the second Monday of each month at City Hall.

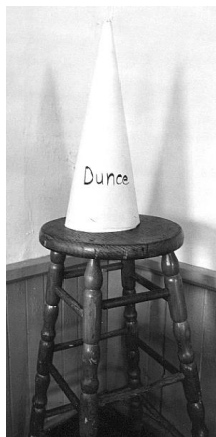
Ames Historical Society is an incorporated, 501C3 not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through publications, programs, exhibitions and operation of an archive and historic site.

**Headqtrs:** 108 5<sup>th</sup>, Ames, Iowa 50010  
**Mail:** PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010  
**Phone:** 515-232- 2148  
**E-mail:** ameshistorical@qwest.net

The newsletter is published four times a year for AHS members. Comments & questions may be directed to: Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010.

Hoggatt School is located on the grounds of Meeker School, near 18<sup>th</sup> and Burnett, Ames, IA. Open April 1 through October 31.

## Summer School is in Session at Hoggatt School: Open regular weekend hours June 5 – Aug. 29



Authentic furnishings, faithful reproductions and knowledgeable hosts give visitors a taste of school life in the Civil War-era. Hoggatt School was built in 1862 to educate the children of early area pioneers.

Give yourself, your children, grandchildren and friends the chance to be charmed by this carefully preserved chapter from the past.

Open hours are Saturdays and Sundays, 2 to 4:30pm starting June 5 and continuing through August 29.

Specialty arranged tours are available by calling Carole Jensen at 233-2431.



## Ames Stories – Interesting Tales & Unique Chapters in Local History

### Menu Recalls Glory Days When Sheldon-Munn Was New

by Farwell T. Brown

(reprinted with permission from a 1986 newsletter)

1915 had been a big year in the annals of Ames history. Ground had been broken for four buildings in the "down town" Ames area - the new City Hall, Mary Greeley Hospital, the Masonic Building (now the Octagon Center for the Arts) and the Sheldon-Munn Hotel. That same year, a major expansion of the city light plant was also under construction.

It is the Sheldon-Munn Hotel that comes to mind particularly at this moment because it was there that the Brown family gathered for their Christmas day dinner in 1919. It was but a few days after my ninth birthday and the Sheldon-Munn was in all its glory in those days.

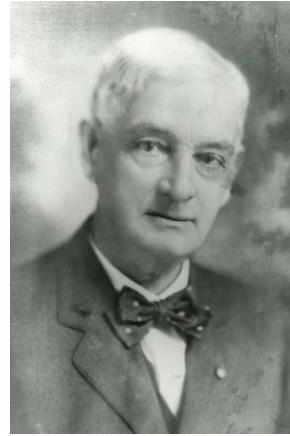
It is something of a pleasant memory to go back [and] relive that day's experience. During an interview with Mrs. Margaret Rogers, a long time resident of Ames, she provided interesting detail relating to the history of Sheldon-Munn. She was the young daughter of Fred and Louella Merrill when they became the hotel's first managers in 1916.



Ames' early hotels had begun to outlive their usefulness in a growing college community as early as 1902. The Ames Commercial Club, on February 27 in that year, had held a smoker down at the old Davis House, the red brick hotel that stood the corner of Main and Duff. That Ames needed a new and modern hotel was the consensus of that, meeting. A committee

consisting Capt. Greeley (above), Parley Sheldon, F. N. Fowler, J. F. Cavell and Galen Tilden was appointed to launch a fund raising effort to build such a hotel.

After twelve years of considering proposals for a new hotel or the extensive remodeling of one of the old existing hotels, a group of Ames business men organized the "Ames Improvement Company" to carry out the community's desire to have a hotel "that would meet not only immediate needs, but meet the future needs of a growing city." A successful venture was finally assured.



Parley Sheldon, left, banker and perennial mayor of Ames, H. L. and A. H. Munn, lumber yard owners, contracted for the hotel's construction in June of 1915. Sheldon and the Munns remained the owners until a major interest was sold to Tagney-McGinn Hotels in 1926. The Ames Improvement Association was involved in arranging for leasing and management.

Ground was broken in late 1915 and the Sheldon-Munn Hotel was formally opened on May 31, 1916. Dean C. F. Curtiss was toastmaster on the occasion of a formal dinner that evening. Dean E. W. Stanton spoke on "The Town and the College" and Harvey Ingham of the Des Moines Register spoke on "Greater Iowa." There were other dignitaries on the agenda that evening too, and the new modern social and service center of Ames was very properly launched.



With its four floors of 72 fine guest rooms, the hotel provided a large ballroom on the fourth floor, a private dining room on third, various meeting rooms, sales display rooms, a four chair barber shop in the east basement, a large main dining room on first and a separate grill or coffee shop on the main street side. All dining facilities were served by the large kitchen under the direction of six full-time chefs!

The new hotel was to be the meeting place - the show place really - for town and college, for there was no Memorial Union then. The hotel was booked months ahead for social events, and fraternity and sorority dances. Professional meetings of many kinds met there. According to Mrs. Rogers it was not uncommon for the Sheldon-Munn to be the site of a ballroom dance, a



private dinner party on third, a smoker in the basement, a convention group somewhere, and a main dining room full of "off the road or street" guests, all at the same time in those days.

It was to this place that the Brown family, below, came for their Christmas dinner on December 25, 1919. Tradition brought our particular family together at Christmas and at Thanksgiving, trading off between the two grandparent families, both residing in Ames. Grandfather and Grandmother Brown had attained the age and family numbers had grown to the point where the Hotel provided the ideal place for that important family event that year. (Farwell is front left.)



A long table had been reserved for us in the main dining room. As we arrived - there were four families of us then in Ames - we were directed by way of the elevator to the second floor ladies' parlor to await the arrival of the rest of the uncles and aunts, cousins and, of course, the grandparents.

But I will never forget the hotel lobby that day. It was terribly cold outdoors and as we entered at the main doorway on the south side of the building, the burning log fire in the fireplace that was on the east wall of the lobby greeted us. The lobby then was much larger than today, as it included all of the area today partitioned off for the present hair salon and also the area occupied now by a barbershop. Original ceilings were high with "square" pillars that can still be seen although the very magnificent marble-looking cover has long since been removed or covered over.

Beautifully tailored drapes were a dark blue. All of the Hotel drapes in the lobby and in the dining and ballrooms were monogrammed with the letters "S.M." In this setting a string ensemble was playing to one side of the huge fireplace. They had several regular musicians

who played every evening in the hotel. One was Fred Snyder who was an engineer with the Highway Commission at the time. Both he and his wife were accomplished violinists in Ames. Another was Harold Kramer, a pianist, who played in the Sheldon- Munn dining room for several years, then went east where he made a name for himself as an entertainer.

After the family had gathered, we were called to the dining room on the first floor, entering through the lobby. The dining room then extended to the Kellogg side and all along the alley side on the North. The dining room ceiling, like the lobby area, was high with molded plaster scroll work along the ceiling corners.

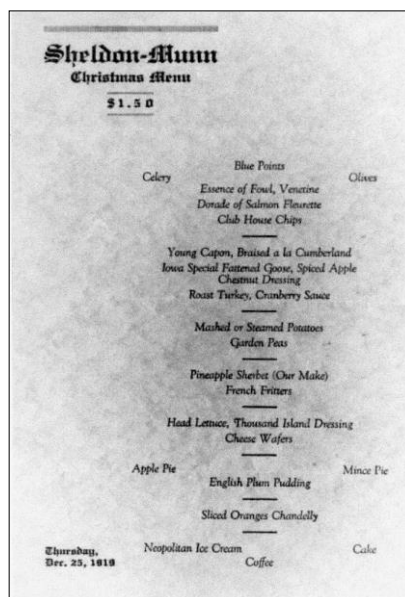
By the time the main dining room was open, on holidays and on Sunday noons all through the year, the string trio or quartet had moved out of the lobby into an elevated alcove that was built into the south wall of the room. It was reached by way of a curved staircase. There was a piano permanently installed in this "elevated orchestra pit" and dinner music was a regular feature of both weekday and Sunday dinner hours and on holidays, of course.

Christmas dinner at Grandmother's was always complete and two kinds of pie could be assumed. The Sheldon- Munn proved to be no exception (below)!

Before we ate, Grandfather gave the blessing but at the hotel it was something special. With the main dining room full of dining couples or groups all smaller than ours, and all around us, how would he handle it? Very simple, he just held up his hand. He was, as I recall, a rather large man, by nature the "take charge" kind. He glanced around the room as the musicians completed a selection and merely asked that "all be quiet for a moment." He then proceeded in his natural clearly spoken manner and gave them the same kind of blessing that he was accustomed to give. And the room was hushed for a few moments – and then we were served.

Sheldon-Munn waiters were quite formal in those days. Precise in manner, they omitted no expected move in their service. One was Henry Gater whom I remember because he must have come to Ames at about the time the Sheldon-Munn was first opened. His family was one of the

first black families to reside in Ames. They lived just a block north of us on Kellogg [in the 1100 block].



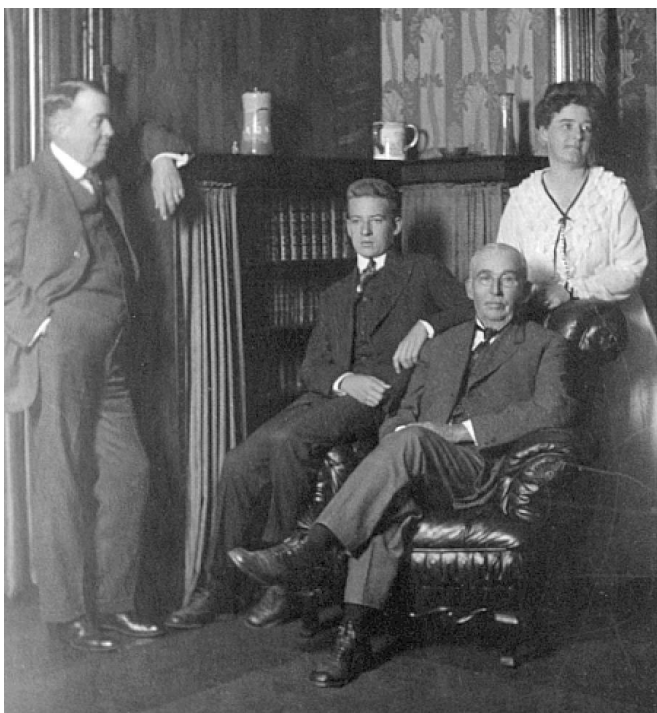
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The tableware at the hotel was a “lovely silver,” Mrs. Rogers recalls. The tablecloths were white damask with all linen napkins. Fluted goblets were used at all special occasions. Like in the lobby, draperies were a rich blue with gold braid borders or ties with the S.M. monogram. The chairs were sturdy, I think painted gold.

The multi-course dinner I could not have detailed had not Mrs. Rogers shown me the 1919 printed menu for that day. What a Christmas dinner – and all for a dollar and a half!

*[Menu is shown on previous page. Among the items served were salmon fluerette appetizer, a main entrée and sides of Iowa special fattened goose, chestnut dressing, and garden peas, and for dessert, English plum pudding and sliced oranges Chandelly. The menu is in the Society’s collection.]*



This picture of three generations of the Munn family dates from 1915. A.H. Munn, the hotel entrepreneur is on the left, H.A. Munn is seated on the arm of the chair, H.L. Munn, lumberyard founder is seated, and Grace A. Munn, A.H.’s wife

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In 2004, the Sheldon-Munn still maintains an imposing presence on Main Street. Its many guest rooms were remodeled into efficiency apartments that have become home to fixed-income residents. With the formation of the Main Street Cultural District in January of this year, some Ames people are thinking how nice it would be to once again have guest accommodations on Main Street.

## Call for Sheldon-Munn Memories

What do you remember about the Sheldon-Munn Hotel? Ames Historical Society members, their families and friends are invited to send their memories of the Sheldon-Munn when it was still operating as a hotel, café and business center.

Send your notes to A.H.S., PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010 or e-mail to [ameshistorical@qwest.net](mailto:ameshistorical@qwest.net).

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## Billy Sunday Returns to Ames

A performance by Brent Grovener who portrays evangelist Billy Sunday will be presented on July 11th at 7:00pm at the First Assembly of God church, 409 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Ames. This is a professional performance with backdrops, sound, costumes and music about Sunday's life and times. For more information, call the church at 232-7111.

Billy Sunday was born south of Ames in 1862. He became a professional baseball player with the Chicago White Stockings in 1883. His interests turned to the programs at the YMCA in Chicago, which lead him to work with a Presbyterian evangelist. His first solo platform appearance was in 1896, and he became a famous and stirring speaker, well known for his theatrical antics and earthy, quotable one-liners.

## Fund Drive Started for Ames Veterans Memorial

After three years of planning, the Ames Veterans Memorial Committee has begun a fund drive to erect a commemorative sculpture and landscape area at the northeast corner of Fifth and Grand. Iowa sculptor, Christopher Bennett of Keosauqua has designed the memorial that will feature a flag, dove and eagle. Donors may contribute any amount or purchase an inscribed brick for \$125. The tax-deductible funds, managed by the Ames Foundation, may be sent to the Foundation at PO Box 213, Ames, IA 50010. For more information, contact Brian Anderson at 232-7060 or Herman Quirnbach at 292-8984.

# Ames Historical Society News

## Society Considers Exec. Director

With the resignation of Community Programs Coordinator, Cynthia Bennet, the Society's Board is taking the opportunity to consider how a replacement paid staff person could meet its current needs.

Cynthia achieved our goal of meeting the public and presenting programs on local history topics. Due to her success, residents are seeking out the museum on a more regular basis. The need to maintain regular open hours and respond to a variety of requests is prompting us to develop a position that encompasses a broader array of responsibilities. The position will be advertised when the job description is complete. It will likely be one-third to one-half time. For info, call 515-232-2148.

## Site Committee Appointed

To meet the Society's goal of having a permanent museum site in five years, the Board will appoint a Site Committee this year. Members who would like to serve on this committee may call the president, Kathy Svec, at 515-232-4877.

## Follow Up on Bauge Fire

The investigation into the fire that destroyed the Bauge Log Home on March 15 has stalled due to lack of leads on a two-tone brown sport-utility-type vehicle that was seen by neighbors in the area. The sheriff's office termed the fire "suspicious"; the McFarland Park staff considers it to be arson. The Story County Sheriff would welcome any information relevant to the case.

In a joint agreement, the Log Home was owned and insured by the Story County Conservation Board. The restoration and furnishings were the responsibility of The Society. A \$15,000+ insurance settlement will be used by the Conservation Board to help finance a sorely needed classroom addition. Initial ideas to include visual references to the log home and artifact display space within the addition have been well accepted. SCCB has an extensive pioneer education program for school-children that will continue despite loss of the home.

## Society Awaits News of HRDP

The Society has applied for funding through the state of Iowa Historic Resource Development Program to assist with the first stages of processing The Tribune Photo Archive. News on grant awards should arrive in the next month.

## Hoggatt School Volunteers Have All the Fun!



Hoggatt School hosts at have an opportunity to learn fun stories and convey them to visitors in a casual setting.

New volunteers willing to fill even one or two slots would be appreciated. The school is open on Saturdays and Sundays from 2 - 4:30pm every weekend through August 29. Call Lynn Jenison at 232-6788 or Jorgen Rasmussen at 292-9309 if you'd enjoy hosting at Hoggatt. *(Picture: school became a house in its later years.)*

## Can You Help to Fund These Special AHS Projects?

The Society is juggling a number of important special projects that will provide a rich array of historic resources for the community. Donations earmarked for any one of these projects would be gladly accepted!

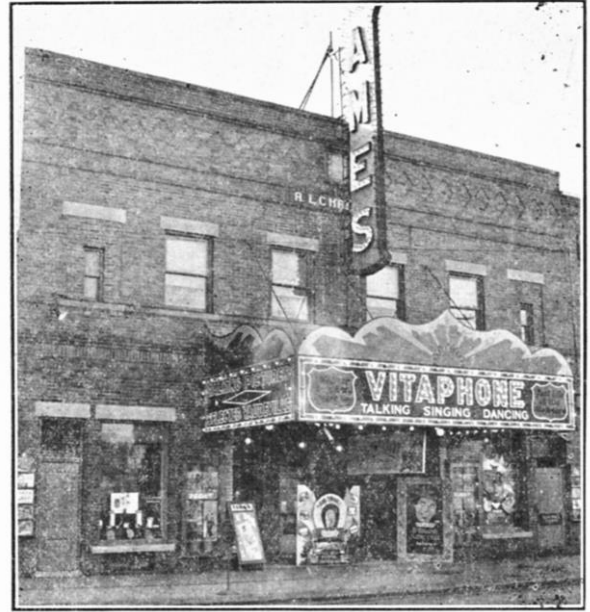
- Additions to the Building Procurement Fund. Our goal is to have a permanent facility within five years.
- After 25 years, Hoggatt School needs maintenance and repairs that will keep it in top-notch condition. In addition, good outdoor signage is needed to increase visibility.
- The oral history project, *Ames Remembers World War II*, will conclude in publication of a book featuring the interviews about life on the home front. Publishing costs will need to be financed.
- Janet Jepeway's documentary project on the transformation of Hallett's Quarry to Ada Hayden Heritage Park has resulted in addition of materials to museum's collection. Archival storage containers are needed to properly store these items.
- If the Society is successful in receiving an HRDP grant to process The Tribune Photo Archive, AHS will need cash match for funds awarded. Assistance in meeting the match will be critical to the success of the project.
- Regular funding of an internship would give an ISU student practical experience in museum practices. The Society would welcome an annual internship award named for the donor.

# Ames Historical Society Annual Report: Mar. 2003 to the Feb. 2004 Annual Meeting

## Association News

- Changed name from Ames Heritage Association to Ames Historical Society, effective Jan. 1, 2004
- Established Museum Building Procurement Fund with \$500 anonymous donor contribution; matched by Board
- Union Pacific Foundation grant funded second year of Programs Coordinator, Cynthia Bennet; Cynthia launched *Ames Remembers World War II* oral history project & continued local history talks to groups
- Sponsored two sessions for College for Seniors: Lincoln Highway and Ames Artifacts & Stories
- Installed exhibit at Ames Public Library, "Coming and Going: Lincoln Highway in Ames", Nov. 9, 2003 – January 18, 2004; City of Ames grant funded publication of an accompanying brochure
- Co-sponsored "Hallett's to Hayden" documentary project with photographic exhibit by Janet Jepeway and lecture and program series – attendance - 250; second exhibit to occur in April 2004 at Story County Conservation Center

- 2004 plans include assessment of roof, replacing entry steps, improved signage and increased use by public.



A 1930 picture of the "New" Ames Theater in campustown, where talking pictures first appeared. This picture is in Society archives.

## Museum at 108 Fifth; 515-232-2148

- Acquired additional shelving, on loan from Ames Public Library; Collections grew to overtake exhibit area
- Hosted open house during Art Walk on May 31 and Thursdays, 5-8pm during Bandshell concert season.
- Updated e-mail address: ameshistorical@qwest.net

## Bauge Log Home

- The Bauge Log Home was open Sundays 1-4pm, May 4 to September 28. Curators: Willie & Rollie Struss
- 30 docents served as volunteer hosts with 276 people visiting, including numbers of Bauge relatives.
- 375 school children visiting the house on 7 days in connection with Iowa History studies.
- The furnishings are nearly complete; need kitchen stove from 1890-1910 time period.
- The accessioning of gifted items is nearly complete; entails determining proper time period, photographing, assigning a number and marking with the accessioning number.
- (Note: The Society mourns the loss of the log home to fire in March 2004.)

## Hoggatt School

- Sixteen volunteers hosted 124 visitors during regular open hours, June 1 – August 31. School tours & use started early in April '03, continued through October, hosting 289 children.
- Brown historic site sign installed on Grand Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street directing visitors to Hoggatt School.
- Reservations & tours handled by Carole Jensen; Hoggatt Committee: Lynn Jenison, Jorgen Rasmussen

## Collections Management

- Paid curators work 16 hours/week; worked with two ISU student interns this year
- Responded to increasing number of donations and inquiries for information
- Acquired 60 years of The Tribune's photo archive for permanent storage, cataloguing

## Other

- Four newsletters produced
- Staff sent to training – Non-Profit Management series; PastPerfect Cataloguing Program
- Membership initiative launched targeting Ames High Alumni resulted in new memberships
- Active participation in Main Street District activities; member Main Street Cultural District
- For 2004, will build upon 2003 goal-setting

## Board Nominations submitted at February Annual Meeting, and approved:

2004-2007

Carole Jensen, Dennis Wendell, Leo Lawler, Ken Cameron

2003-2006

Peggy Baer, Lynn Jenison, Margaret Elbert Benson, Janet Jepeway

2002-2005

Kathy Svec, Jorgen Rasmussen, Catherine Hunt, Deborah

Vance, Cynthia Bennet



# Ames Historical Society Goals for 2004

## **Goal 1: Promote general interest in local history and keep AHS in the public eye.**

1. Hire program or museum coordinator to replace Cynthia Bennet who has resigned her paid position, but remains on the Board to complete the "Ames Remembers World War II" oral history project.
2. Develop a website
3. Sponsor a regular schedule of exhibits and programs open to our members and the public.
  - Develop interactive, all-ages exhibits and programs that use artifacts from the AHS collection.
  - Organize Hoggatt School Festival.
  - Tour exhibits to other sites after initial showing at the public library.
  - Investigate partnering with City Auditorium for the "Toby Tent Show"
4. Expand newsletter to eight pages
  - Include reprints of stories from past newsletters
  - Include Ames memories and "flashbacks" from Board and members.
  - Submit stories to Ames High Alumni newsletter or other publications
5. Utilize various means of media coverage.
  - Provide info for a regular column in the newspaper or radio show – such as "On This Day in History", a picture from FTB collection or AHS collection,
  - Ask Quester groups to sponsor shows on historical topics in their expertise areas
  - Have a program on the local cable station or radio to talk about our collections and encourage donations.
6. Complete interviews for "Ames Remembers World War II" project

*Enlist members to assist.*

## **Goal 2: Discover, collect and preserve materials that establish or illustrate the history of Ames and Story County – that is - acquire artifacts and store them appropriately.**

1. Form a site committee composed of key community individuals to find either a larger temporary space or permanent museum site.
2. Continue to acquire artifacts and collections.
3. Use our education programs to showcase the importance of artifacts
4. Create a major diorama (Bauge? N-scale trains?) possibly at the library? Seek space for this kind of display

*Enlist members to assist.*

## **Goal 3: Fund and support our organization, support paid staff and build partnerships to step toward a shared facility.**

1. Consult with a fund-raising expert
2. Produce needed publications:
  - Complete an updated general info brochure about AHS, with membership information.
  - Complete an estate-planning or memorials brochure and distribute to lawyers, accountants.
  - Promote awareness of our Building Procurement Fund
3. Sponsor a small scale fundraising event in the fall of 2004
4. Obtain targeted grants for special projects. Continue to seek grants and funds to hire more paid staff.



Ames Historical Society headquarters at 108 Fifth

## **Goal 4: Evaluate our efforts periodically.**

1. Schedule two Board planning sessions/year. One to assess progress in the previous year and set new goals, one at mid-year to evaluate. Set Sunday, OCTOBER 24, 2004 as the mid-year date.
2. Develop short, useable mission statement

## Museum Building Fund Grows!

In our January newsletter, we featured a story about the anonymous donor of modest means who stimulated establishment of a Museum Building Procurement Fund. The fund continues to grow!

Building Fund	February 2004	\$1275
Building Fund	April 2004	\$2950
Building Fund	June 2004	\$3455

### Renew Today!

Membership renewals for 2004 are due on the one-year anniversary date of last year's payment.

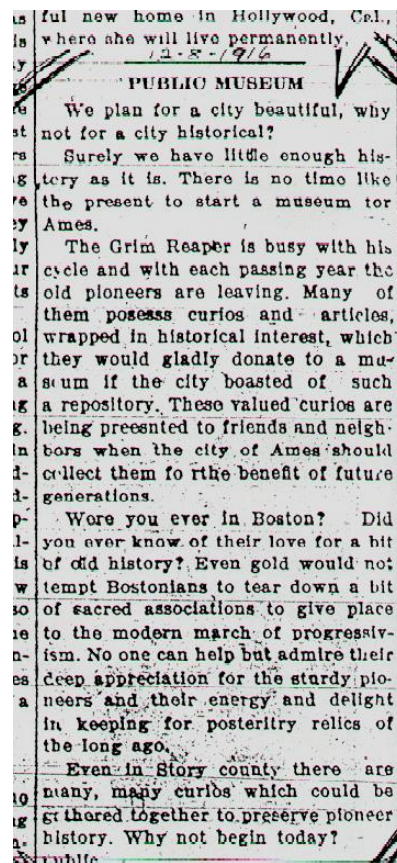
See the label on this newsletter for your anniversary date and the level at which you renewed or joined.

Introductory	\$10		
Individual	\$25	Sustaining	\$100
Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
Friend	\$50	Patron	\$1,000

**Additional amount** for Building Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(separate check please..)

Send to:

**Ames Historical Society, PO Box 821, Ames, IA 50010**  
Soon!



On Dec. 8, 1916, a front page article in the Ames Evening Times cited the loss of "curios and articles wrapped in historical interest" and stated "There is no time like the present to start a museum for Ames ... to preserve pioneer history."

That call went unanswered for 74 years when, in 1980, Ames historian Farwell Brown established Ames Heritage Association to be the local history organization (now renamed Ames Historical Society). Since then, two historic structures have been restored but serious efforts to collect artifacts did not begin until 1999.

Why so late?

Those here today simply do not know! The effort that was deemed pressing in 1916 is even more so today.